

~~COLUMN COMMENT~~

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*Formosa's Status*

By Marquis Childs

*Why Nationalists Are Not Usable*

AT LAST in piecemeal fashion the facts are beginning to come out about the Nationalist troops of Chiang Kai-shek on Formosa. This is due in large measure to the forthright and soldierly answers given by Gen. Omar Bradley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in answer to questions from Senators conducting the inquiry into General MacArthur's dismissal.



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The Nationalist troops are not wanted in Korea because they have to be equipped and transported and when they got there they would be of doubtful value. This statement by Bradley should dispel the illusion—propagated both from Formosa and from the China lobby in this country—that trained and equipped forces are ready to be picked up and taken within a few days notice to the Korean front lines.

Many months ago the true status of Chiang's force was established and by MacArthur's own staff. A top-secret document of last September tells the story in detail. The Senate committee has that document which, as this is written, it has not yet decided to release.

On August 5, 1950, a survey mission was sent by General MacArthur from Tokyo to Formosa. The mission was headed by Maj. Gen. Alonzo P. Fox, deputy chief of staff. Fox and 36 other officers spent nearly the entire month studying the military situation on the island and the capabilities of Chiang's armies.

THE FOX mission had been told to find out (1) whether the Nationalists could defend the island without the presence of the United States Seventh Fleet which had been ordered by President Truman on June 25 to set up a neutrality patrol between Formosa and the mainland; and (2) whether the Nationalist troops could defend the island if the Communists should get through the barricade of the Seventh Fleet and make a landing.

The answer to No. 1 was most emphatically in the negative. The answer to No. 2 was also in the negative. In other words, Chiang's armies could not carry out a defensive action in the limited area they occupied. This means, of course, that they would be worse than useless on the offensive.

After Fox and the members of his mission flew back to Tokyo on August 26, they prepared their lengthy report. It was submitted to General MacArthur

who stamped it "reviewed and approved."

Late in November MacArthur asked the Joint Chiefs to okay the use of Nationalist troops in Korea. Almost nothing had happened in the meantime to change the capabilities of those troops. But United Nations armies were desperately hard pressed by the massive intervention of the Chinese Communists.

A week ago Chiang, himself, offered his forces to the commanders in Korea even though still nothing essential has happened to change their capabilities. Either he does not know the true situation or this was purely a propaganda gesture. The requests he has put in for equipment—air, navy and ground—add up to billions of dollars.

AS WAS first reported in this space, a Joint Chiefs' recommendation in December of 1949 to send an American military mission to Formosa was overruled when the State Department persuaded the President against it. A little later when the proposal was brought up again in a White House meeting, the President, with some irritation, declared that the matter had been settled and would not be reopened.

This is a point on which the Senators are anxious to question Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Obviously, if a mission had been sent a year and a half ago instead of a month ago, at least a part of Chiang's forces would be in a state of readiness and capable at the very least of a successful defense of Formosa.

Prepared for this question, Acheson will cite a report of the Central Intelligence Agency assembled on the basis of carefully evaluated intelligence from throughout Asia. The conclusion of the CIA was that Formosa almost inevitably would fall to the Communists some time during 1950. In explanation of the highly controversial State Department memorandum advising diplomatic officers in the Orient, to prepare opinion for the fall of Chiang's last bastion, Acheson will testify to a telephone call from an Assistant Secretary of Defense, acting presumably on the orders of the then Secretary, Louis Johnson, warning of the need to get ready for Formosa's loss.

The questioning on who was right when and why is likely to stir tempers, particularly since the target in the witness chair will be Acheson. But the discussion will be academic, since the history of the past year and a half cannot be reversed. It is important, however, to get the record straight on the Nationalist force in being on Formosa so that only those will now be deceived who want to be deceived.